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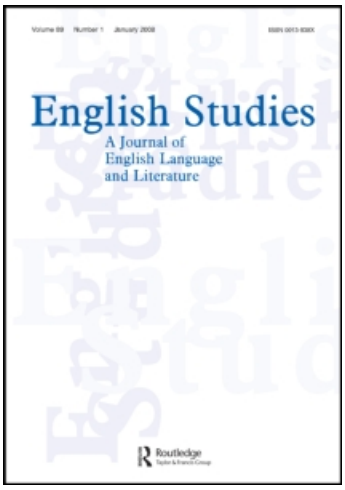

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Dietetics as a Key to Language and Character in Shakespeare's Comedy

Carolin Biewer

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1. Introduction

"Does not our lives consist of the four elements?" Sir Andrew is asked by his companion Sir Toby in *Twelfth Night* (TN). "Faith, so they say," is Sir Andrew's answer, "but I think it rather consists of eating and drinking" (TN, II, iii, 7ff). Sir Andrew knows about the Elizabethan doctrine that everything consists of the four elements fire, water, air and earth.[1] He has understood that eating and drinking are everyday needs of every living thing. But he does not see a connection between the elements, whose individual mixture in a human body was believed to be responsible for an individual's actions and character traits, and the taking of food and drink as cause or result of this mixture of the elements. The Elizabethans, however, believed that the composition of the elements did not only influence your appetite but that food and drink would influence the composition of the elements, and therefore the humours in your body and therefore your passions.[2]

In the Elizabethan period dietetics as the doctrine of appropriate eating and drinking according to the mixture of the elements and humours in your body was very popular. Authors like Sir Thomas Elyot devoted whole books to discussing the effects of all kinds of food and drink if one of the four bodily humours—choler, phlegm, blood or melancholy—dominated in the body. Advice was given on whether pepper was suitable to be added to a dish for a phlegmatic person or whether a choleric person should avoid partridge wings.[3] The discussion of food and drink in Shakespeare's comedies, or the mentioning of certain dishes, is often intended to indicate these ideas of dietetics. With the knowledge of the dietetic concepts of the time it becomes possible to understand the way the disposition of a character is

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[1]Anderson, 29.
[2]Cf. Biewer, *Die Sprache der Liebe in Shakespeares Komödien*, 130f; and the many examples in Elyot, e.g. 27r, 30r, 32, 32r, etc (NB: in Elyot the sheets, not the pages, are numbered, 30r refers to the reverse of sheet 30).
[3]Elyot, 20r, 30r.

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described with the semantic field *food*.[4] What a character eats or is said to like as food, and whether he or she follows the rules of dietetics, becomes an evaluation of the character and finally a statement on his or her capacity to love.

In this article I am going to describe the dietetic concepts behind the discussion of food and drink in Shakespeare's romantic comedies and their implication for the portrayal of the characters. It will become apparent that if we look closely at the choice of words in connection with cultural concepts of dietetics of the time, we will find a new access to language and character in the Shakespearean comedy.[5] I will start with a general description of the concepts of dietetics and how the Elizabethans related those to their psychology of the humours and passions (Section 2). In Section 3 I will introduce dietetics as a key to language and passion in Shakespearean comedy. I will then look at three different comedies in turn, *Twelfth Night* (TN), *Much Ado about Nothing* (Ado) and *As You Like It* (AYL), to describe especially the characterisation of the lovers in the light of dietetics (Section 4.1–4.3). Section 5 summarises the results.

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2. Dietetics in the Elizabethan Period

A core concept of Elizabethan psychology was the doctrine of humouralism.[6] It was the belief that everything was composed of the four elements, fire, water, air and earth, and that the human body was ''sustained and nourished'' by choler, phlegm, blood and melancholy—the four humours, which were said to correspond in their quality to these four elements.[7] Choler like fire was said to be hot and dry, phlegm like water was characterised as cold and moist, melancholy like earth as cold and dry and blood like air as hot and moist.[8] According to the doctrine of humouralism the four humours were fundamental to a person's temper and psyche.[9] A dominance of blood, for instance, was said to advance joy, hope and sexual desire, a dominance of melancholy to advance fear, sadness and despair, choler was said to advance braveness and anger, whereas phlegm made people dispassionate.[10]

The Elizabethans believed that while the individual mixture of the humours in your body influenced your appetite, your eating and drinking habits would also show effects on this humoral mixture.[11] Therefore, with what you eat or drink you can influence the mixture of your humour and with that your passions.

[4]A semantic field is a ''set of semantically related words whose meanings delimit each other and are said to cover a whole conceptual or objective field without gaps'' (Bussmann, 274f).

[5]This article summarises some results of my Ph.D. thesis on the language of passion in Shakespeare's comedy which was published in German in 2006 under the title *Die Sprache der Liebe in Shakespeares Komödien—eine Semantik und Pragmatik der Leidenschaft*.

[6]Hoeniger, 71f.

[7]Anderson, 33f; Biewer, ''The semantics of passion'', 507.

[8]Anderson, 29.

[9]Hoeniger, 33f.

[10]Wright, 64, 65.

[11]*School of Salernum*, e.g. 82; Elyot, e.g. 30r, 72. The main purpose of the book is to describe what to eat if a certain humour dominates and a better balance in the mixture of the bodily humours is wanted. Anderson, 46.

Dietetics—the term is derived from Greek δίαιτα "life-style"—in a narrow definition is the doctrine of appropriate eating and drinking in order to heal or avoid illnesses.[12] Treatises on dietetics, as for instance Sir Thomas Elyot's *The Castel of Helthe* from 1541, discuss which food is appropriate for a phlegmatic, a sanguine, a melancholic or choleric person. Pepper for instance was characterised as being hot and dry. It, therefore, would be an ideal ingredient for a dish for a phlegmatic person as the phlegmatic suffers from an excess of coldness and moisture. But it would not be good for a choleric person to eat pepper as it would only reinforce the excess of heat and dryness which already dominates the body.[13]

Treatises on dietetics in the early modern period—a kind of early modern health guide—are not restricted to advice on food and drink. For Hippocrates the theory of dietetics covers any action that is good and necessary for a healthy body, for instance exercise, sleep, mental exercise and sex.[14] It even includes the style of housing and the way people dress.[15] However, rest, moderate bodily exercise and moderate diet are seen as the core elements to gain a healthy mixture of the humours. This is probably why in several treatises of the Elizabethan psychology the authors like to refer back to the *School of Salernum* which says: "Use three Physicions still; first Doctor *Quiet*, / Next Doctor *Merry-man*, and Doctor *Dyet*."[16] On the other hand, it is particularly through the prescription of a certain diet that a medic in the early modern period can influence the well-being of his patient, "[...] as for quiet and merry man, they lie in no physicians hands to give but onlye in Goddes."[17] Another reason why food and drink become a prominent part of Elizabethan psychology is, that the Elizabethans were particularly anxious about the psychological consequences of eating ill-prepared food or food of bad quality.[18]

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3. Dietetic Concepts as a Key to Language and Passion

The belief that food could reinforce the dominance of a humour or weaken it in relation to others also explains why to the Elizabethans there was a certain responsibility in what food one chose to eat.[19] In Shakespeare's comedies the description of a preference for certain food may be a sign for a certain dominance of a humour. The phlegmatic type, for instance, loves eating and drinking and Sir Toby's passion for food and drink in TN shows he must be phlegmatic. Dietetics is also used by Shakespeare to evaluate a character's capacity to love. Beatrice in Ado takes some

[12]Grandison et al., eds., 439; Foucault, 2:129ff.
[13]Elyot, 30r, 72. The idea is to regain a balance of the humours by promoting those two of the four elementary properties of hot/cold and dry/moist that the dominating humour does not have.
[14]Foucault, 2:129ff.
[15]Bright, 242f.
[16]*School of Salernum*, 22.
[17]Bullein, I, quoted from Williams, 191.
[18]Cf. Davies, lines 1037–44.
[19]According to the followers of Pythagoras, humankind is morally responsible to preserve inner balance, which means that on moral grounds human beings have to take care they chose the appropriate food (Foucault, 2:133).

pain to describe Benedick's eating and drinking habits as habits of someone who cannot be of the sanguine type, that is someone who is not capable of love. Orsino in TN refers to the excess of eating as surfeit—which according to the regulations of dietetics is condemnable as you should not eat too much and only if you are hungry[20]—to describe his feelings and how to get rid of them. Touchstone in AYL, in contrast, uses food not for a psychological description of love but to refer to mere sexual desire. The need to eat and drink is seen here as on the same level as sexual desire, as both are basic desires linked with the vegetative part of the soul.[21] Touchstone as a representative of the sensual lover, whose love is not driven by understanding or imagination but by the senses,[22] is, therefore not surprisingly, using a large number of words from the semantic field *food*.

These are the key aspects of how dietetics is used in Shakespearean comedy to portray a character: the association of food with humours and passions, the allusion to the role of dietetics to regulate the humours and the description of the mere sexual desire of the sensual lover. Especially with looking at the choice of words to describe food and drink and eating and drinking habits in connection with dietetics it becomes possible to distinguish between the three different types of lover in Shakespeare's comedy: the rational lover, the idealising lover and the sensual lover.[23] In the following sections the different connections between dietetic concepts, the semantic field *food* and different concepts of love will be discussed in detail for the different plays TN, Ado and AYL.

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4. Dietetics in Shakespeare's Romantic Comedies

4.1 Twelfth Night

At first a few general examples will be given to show how dietetics and the semantic field *food* are used to present a character in TN. Sir Toby and Sir Andrew are characterised by their eating habits and their allusion to food and drink. Consider for instance Sir Toby's reaction to Malvolio's condemnation of Sir Toby's constant misbehaviour:

[20]*School of Salernum*, 41–5; Charron, 540.

[21]Both Aristotle and Plato believed that the soul was divided into three parts. According to Plato these three parts were residing in three different organs in the body. He distinguished between a rational part of the soul residing in the brain, a sensitive part of the soul residing in the heart and a vegetative part residing in the liver. The liver was seen as the organ that supported the nourishment of the body as well as reproduction, hence the connection of food with sexual desire (Plato, 143–51; Hoeniger, 131, 140).

[22]In analogy with the three parts of the soul three degrees of knowledge and desire and with that three degrees of love were distinguished in Shakespeare's lifetime: a love dominated by the senses, a love dominated by imagination and a love dominated by the intellect (Anderson, 121). In accordance with that, one finds three types of lovers in Shakespeare's romantic comedy: the rational lover, who gains a realistic picture of love and finds fulfilling love because he or she is guided by the intellect; the idealising lover, who follows a love fantasy and falls into erroneous passions until he or she learns to become a rational lover; and the sensual lover, who is guided by sexual desires only (Biewer, "The semantics of passion," 508).

[23]See note 22. The terms *sensual* and *rational love* are chosen in accordance with Parker.

> Sir Toby: Dost thou think because thou art virtuous there shall be no more cakes and ale? (II, iii, 98f)

According to Elyot ale helped the body to gain a good temperature, but he believed wine to be better for that than ale, as the quality of wine was closer to the natural heat and moisture of the human body. Ale was supposed to be of a more gross quality that would produce stronger vapours which were more likely to corrupt the humours.[24] Someone who enjoys wine in good measure like Benedick, therefore, is characterised more favourably than someone like Sir Toby who drinks beer in excess.

In TN drinking habits are almost exclusively discussed with respect to the drinking of alcohol. Elyot describes the positive effects of the right quantity of wine as wine nourishes the vapours in the body and supports heat and moisture of the body and enlarges the amount of blood. At the same time he warns that young people should drink less wine, otherwise they would tend to lechery. And he also warns about the danger of drinking too much too quickly and of drinking bad wine, which would cause human beings to become animal-like.[25] The better the quality of a wine is, the better is the mixture of the humours.[26] Knowing this, it becomes interesting that Shakespeare has Sir Toby mishear Olivia's charge of lethargy as one of lechery (I, v, 103) and that he does not drink wine of good quality but Canary, which is very sweet (I, iii, 67). Elyot continues to say that thick wines produce phlegm, that too much wine produces choler and dark wine produces melancholy.[27] Sir Toby not only reinforces his phlegmatic inclination but also demonstrates a choleric temper towards the end of the play when he quarrels with Sebastian (IV, i) and verbally abuses Sir Andrew (V, i). There are hints in the text that Sir Toby is drunk during the play and increasingly loses control of himself. The dietetic ideas help us to understand the development of the character and how he is supposed to be judged.[28]

Another interesting reference to dietetics is given when Shakespeare, in the context of ale, mentions ginger. When Feste says "[...] and ginger should be hot i'th' mouth too" (II, iii, 100), he is referring to the idea that ginger warms the stomach and helps with the digestion, especially the digestion of superfluous phlegm. Too much ginger, however, would damage the liver.[29] In the Elizabethan period ginger was added to ale. When Sir Toby requests his ale—although Malvolio condemns all festivity and all drinking—Feste readjusts Malvolio's perspective by indicating that ale contains ginger and that this would be good for Sir Toby to drink to reduce his phlegm, you therefore could not simply condemn all drinking.

Another dish that is mentioned to characterise Sir Toby is fish. Fish was said to be good for a choleric stomach as it produced phlegm, but poisonous for a phlegmatic

[24]Elyot, 34, 34r, 55.
[25]Ibid., 32–3r.
[26]*The School of Salernum*, 30.
[27]Elyot, 11r, 12.
[28]Especially if one recalls that eating abundantly is condemned in dietetics.
[29]Elyot, 58r, 72, 72r.

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stomach as it reinforced this humour.[30] No wonder, therefore, that Sir Toby has to belch after eating herring: '"Tis a gentleman here—[belches] a plague o' these pickle herring!" (I, v, 99) His full name, Sir Toby Belch, is also telling. It is a hint that he has to belch a lot, that is has a sick stomach[31]—probably from not caring about his diet. This not only confirms his phlegmatic disposition but also indicates that he does not show the required sense of responsibility for a proper diet. Once again this tells us how we are supposed to judge this character from what we know about his eating habits.

In the following dialogue Sir Toby purposely understands *caper* as the vegetable:

Sir Toby: What is thy excellence in a galliard, knight?
Sir Andrew: Faith, I can cut a caper.
Sir Toby: And I can cut the mutton to't. (I, iii, 97–9)

Again Shakespeare's knowledge of dietetics becomes obvious. Anglicus Bartholomaeus writes that capers in the salad together with lamb are ideal to fight an abundance of phlegm.[32] It also becomes apparent that Sir Toby fails follow a proper diet out of ignorance; he knows what would be good for him to eat and drink. When Sir Andrew is talked into issuing a challenge to Cesario as a rival in love for Olivia, Andrew comes back with the words: "Here's the challenge; [...] I warrant there's vinegar and pepper in't" (III, iv, 121f). *Vinegar and pepper* here serves to describe both Sir Andrew and his challenge. Pepper alone is hot and dry and produces choler, which would help to overcome a dominance of phlegm,[33] so it would be ideal to transform Sir Andrew's or his opponent's lethargy into rage. Vinegar on the contrary is cold and dry and helps to digest choler.[34] Vinegar therefore cancels the effect of pepper. This is a perfect characterisation of Sir Andrew and his challenge. The challenge is too ridiculous to put someone into rage and Sir Andrew is too much of a coward to be able to transform his phlegm into choler.

In contrast to Sir Toby's coarseness, which is illustrated by his eating and drinking habits, a discussion between Antonio and Sebastian about food can be seen as an allusion to friendship.

Antonio: I will bespeak our diet,
Whiles you beguile the time, and feed your knowledge
With viewing of the town; [...] (III, iv, 40–2)

Antonio knows about Sebastian's grief over the recent loss of his sister, which will have unbalanced the mixture of the humours in his body. He represents himself as a caring friend who will ensure that Sebastian will receive the diet that is appropriate

[30]Ibid., 11r, 22r, 23.
[31]Ibid., 86r.
[32]Bartholomaeus, 284. Of course you can also interpret *mutton* as a sexual allusion, meaning "prostitute."
[33]Elyot, 11r, 30r, 72.
[34]Ibid., 58.

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for his disposition. This is a first demonstration of emotion with the semantic field *food* but without a deeper psychological implication. A clear connection between humour, passion, stomach and corporality is drawn by Count Orsino who has fallen in love with Olivia:

> Orsino: If music be the food of love, play on;
> Give me excess of it, that surfeiting,
> The appetite may sicken and so die. (I, i, 1–3)

This passage is remarkable in comparison with a passage from *The School of Salernum*:

> To keepe good dyet, you should never feed
> Until you finde your stomach cleane and void
> Of former eaten meate, [...] None other rule but appetite should need, [...][35]

In dietetics you should eat only when you are hungry and never too much but in good measure.[36] Against this dietetic rule Orsino demands surfeit which will, according to dietetics, cause a loss of appetite. With the metaphorical application of this rule to love he is demanding an excess of love in order that it be replaced by a loss of appetite for love. It is interesting to see in this case that what Orsino demands (a surfeit) is contrary to the principles of dietetics but that the result he intends from this surfeit is exactly what these principles predict. On the other hand the term *appetite* also links the semantic field *food* with sexual appetite, a meaning which Orsino disguises in his worship of the beloved. This, then, is a direct psychological implication and not simply a metaphorical description of love.

In ironic contrast to this first description of his love, one finds another description of his love in II, iv in comparison to a woman's love using words from the semantic field *food*:

> Orsino: Alas, their [the women's] love may be called appetite,
> No motion of the liver but the palate,
> That suffers surfeit, cloyment, and revolt,
> But mine is all hungry as the sea,
> And can digest as much. Make no compare
> Between that love a woman can bear me,
> And that I owe Olivia. (II, iv, 93–9)

The love of women is seen as being on the same level as the desire for eating and drinking and mere sexual desire, both desires controlled by the vegetative soul. And it is seen as a love that quickly experiences surfeit and dies. In the Elizabethan period women were seen as mainly phlegmatic, which means that, according to Elyot, they

[35]*The School of Salernum*, 41–5.
[36]Charron, 540.

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have a bad digestion.[37] In contrast to that Orsino describes his love as a love of the liver; the liver here is seen as the initiator of true love.[38] And his capacity for love is described as endless; there will never be a surfeit or a problem with the digestion of love. This is in sharp contrast to the first passage, in which Orsino tries to reach this surfeit of love he now claims he cannot reach. As the sanguine type is the one which supposedly has a good digestion,[39] the contrast between *palate* and *surfeit*, *cloyment* and *revolt* on the one hand and good digestion, no surfeit and love of the liver on the other hand shows a contrast between the women as a phlegmatic and the man Orsino as a sanguine type. Orsino sees himself as the sanguine lover in contrast to the phlegmatic women who only feel sexual desire and are not constant. This language refers to Elizabethan psychology and dietetics and mixes psychological interpretation with metaphor.

The two following passages show a direct connection between the passion of love, its consequence for the body and the semantic field *food*.

Viola: She never told her love
But let concealment like a worm i'th' bud
Feed on her damask cheek. (II, iv, 106–8)

Olivia: O you are sick of self-love, Malvolio, and tastes with a distempered appetite. (I, v, 73f)

Viola's alleged sister's body is worn out by her love melancholy; Malvolio's self-love influences his appetite and with that his stomach, so that he becomes grumpy and impertinent against Feste.

It can be seen that the semantic field *food* is used in many ways and variants in TN. It is interesting to observe that characters like Sir Toby and Orsino prove to have knowledge in dietetics but only use these rules and regulations as long as it serves their purpose and that Orsino combines his allusion with pompous imagery. His excess in love gains a dietetic basis but also makes obvious his preference for fantasy and exaggeration which is typical of the idealising lover. Viola and Olivia (before she meets Cesario) both use short references to love and food, which shows a connection between these two subjects that was absolutely real for the Elizabethans. The different evaluations of food by Sir Toby compared to Malvolio and their different eating and drinking habits show the festive Twefth Night character of the play in combat with Puritanism and that both positions result in distempered stomachs. The language and the concepts of eating and drinking therefore give us a deep insight into different character traits with a special connection to festivity and the different types of love.

[37]Elyot, 2, 2r, 3.
[38]For the different interpretations of *liver* cf. Biewer, *Die Sprache der Liebe in Shakespeares Komödien*, 56ff.
[39]Elyot, 2, 2r, 3.

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4.2 Much Ado About Nothing

In Ado the concepts and the terminology of dietetics help characterise the complex relationship between Benedick and Beatrice. When Beatrice describes Benedick's eating and drinking habits she refers to his humoral disposition and with that to his (in)ability to love. Her choice of words also shows a lot about her own feelings. Terms and concepts of dietetics become a decisive device of communication in the verbal combat between Beatrice and Benedick until the declaration of love in IV, i. Beatrice's second question to Don Pedro's messenger in I, i already contains an allusion to dietetic ideas which are not flattering for Benedick:

> Beatrice: [. . .] how many hath he killed and eaten in these wars? But how many hath he killed?—for indeed I promised to eat all his killing. (I, i, 31–3)

and she continues with:

> Beatrice: You had musty victual, and he hath holp to eat it: he is a very valiant trencherman, he hath an excellent stomach. (I, i, 37f)

Benedick is described as someone who does not think about what he eats, as someone who is even supposed to be capable of cannibalism, which would be the most extreme dietetic misbehaviour, characterising the person as disgusting and undignified.[40] Also in the second passage Benedick is described as someone who does not care about the quantity or quality of food and who eats food that has gone off already, he has an excellent stomach and can digest a lot. Beatrice characterises Benedick here as someone who does not pay any attention to appropriate eating behaviour, and therefore disregards the balance of his humours; in terms of dietetics this is immoral behaviour.[41] On the other hand, by talking about an excellent stomach she also points out that Benedick must be of the choleric type, for the choleric is the only one who can digest gross meat.[42] This indicates he does not belong to the sanguine type, that is the people most inclined to love. The purpose of referring to dietetics is not just to give Benedick a characterisation as a coarse, bad man but also to show he is not only incapable of love, but that he destroys love by his own irresponsibility as he does not care to get the balance of his humours right. During the play there are hints that Benedick and Beatrice were in love before but that they split up and these accusations make clear that in Beatrice's eyes it was his fault. There is also another level to it: gluttony is not only one of the deadly sins but, as Pierre Charron points out, was believed to damage the intellect and to make the human being become more

[40]Williams, 198.
[41]Of course the whole argument falls back on her as she would also act as a cannibal if she ate the people he killed in the war. She also makes that bold claim as she is convinced he did not kill anyone.
[42]Elyot, 71.

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animal-like.[43] To abandon oneself to eating also shows that the vegetative part of the soul is, together with the primitive desires, taking control; it becomes, therefore, an allusion to the reign of the primitive desires. With her language Beatrice does not simply describe Benedick as acting in an immoral way, but as a man with no intellect (the whole verbal combat is an act to try to triumph with her intellect over his) who, instead of fostering rational love, helps mere sexual desire to take control. As she also offers to eat all the men he killed in the war and calls him a ''valiant trencherman'', a brave eater, she comments that she believes him a bragger of his deeds. Within these two comments of hers we see the use of dietetic terms and concepts that provide a clear picture not of who Benedick is but how Beatrice sees him and what kind of relationship has been established between them.

The usage of dietetics by Beatrice does not end here but is continued with the following statement: ''[...] he is no less than a stuffed man, but for the stuffing—well, we are all mortal'' (Beatrice, I, i, 43f). Once again we have the picture of Benedick as a man who loves eating and eats without considering what he eats. But one also finds the idea that he becomes what he eats. In contrast to that it is interesting that Beatrice, in the same scene, in her first conversation with Benedick, says: ''Is it possible that Disdain should die, while she has such meet food to feed it, as Signior Benedick?'' (I, i, 89f). Benedick as *meet food* once again characterises him as a great eater and a big meal for Beatrice. On the other hand if she as Lady Disdain lives off him, she is now the cannibal, or to put it less bluntly, she becomes what she is through him. It is in the verbal combat with him she can show her cleverness and it is through his former behaviour that she suffers from bitterness. The way he behaves stirs her passions.

The following remark once again includes a word from the semantic field *food* that characterises Benedick through his stomach:

> Beatrice: [...], he'll but brake a comparison or two on me, which per adventure (not marked, or not laughed at) strikes him into melancholy, and then there's a partridge wing saved, for the fool will eat no supper that night [...] (II, i, 109–12)

Benedick's melancholy if no one laughs at his jokes makes him lose his appetite. It is interesting that of all possible dishes it is the partridge wing he refuses to eat. Partridge in the dietetics of the time was claimed to be particularly nutritious, the wings more than the legs.[44] Something very good is now left for the others to eat, so no one will be much disturbed by Benedick's melancholy. On the other hand as partridge can be easily digested it would be the wrong food for the choleric as the heat in his stomach would burn it quickly so that no nutrients can be preserved.[45] A statement that Benedick normally would prefer partridge wings once again

[43]Charron, 540.
[44]Elyot, 71.
[45]Ibid.

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demonstrates his carelessness of what he eats and whether it is good for him. Moreover the partridge was claimed to be a lecherous bird. The treatises of the time claim that eating partridge would make people lecherous too.[46] Benedick's general desire for partridge becomes a symbol that in love he is more inclined to mere sexual desire than rational love. Once again Beatrice gives a profound characteristic of Benedick's alleged character by using terms and concepts of dietetics.

After all theses reproaches on dietetic grounds Benedick's retort picks up the use of dietetics for characterisation. ''Oh God, sir, here's a dish I love not, I cannot endure my Lady Tongue'' (II, i, 207f) is the reason Benedick gives for wanting to avoid Beatrice. Beatrice claims Benedick eats everything, but this is now contradicted as there is one dish Benedick rejects, the dish Beatrice. Also while choleric people are believed to eat a lot—the heat in their stomach burns the food so quickly that they always are in need of more—they are also believed to have a squeamish stomach, especially if it is too much food or the wrong food.[47] They eat and suffer. But Benedick now becomes choosy and does not swallow everything anymore, in this case Beatrice's verbal abuse. This shows an interesting mixture of a demonstration of disposition and metaphoric allusion to dietetics.

How many different meanings can be united under one dietetic term is also demonstrated by the following remark made by Don Pedro, when he describes his plans to make Benedick, despite all his reservations, fall in love with Beatrice:

> Don Pedro: [...] and I, with your two helps, will so practice on Benedick that in despite of his quick wit, and his queasy stomach, he shall fall in love with Beatrice: [...] (II, i, 288–90)

Don Pedro wants to make Benedick fall in love despite his sensitive stomach, despite him being a choosy choleric who has just announced his refusal of the dish Beatrice. Benedick's position on marriage here corresponds to his queasy stomach. And how does Benedick defend his sudden love for Beatrice when he falls into the trap?

> Benedick: [...] doth not the appetite alter? A man loves the meat in his youth, that he cannot endure in his age. (II, iii, 194f)

What he wants to say with that is that his temper has changed and that this is a natural development as one grows older. In the psychological treatises it is described that the mixture of the humours changes over time, which will also affect the appetite. Benedick now likes the dish Beatrice and is able to digest things he could not digest before as with age the temperature in the stomach falls.[48] The Elizabethan treatises also predict that when you become older melancholy becomes the dominant

[46]Elyot, 20r, 21r; Bartholomaeus, 187; *The School of Salernum*, 36.
[47]Elyot, 71f; *The School of Salernum*, 81.
[48]Anderson, 37.

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humour[49] and love melancholy as a special form of melancholy will indeed strike Benedick. But of course it is part of comedy that Shakespeare, with that rapid change from rejection to love, lets Benedick argue as one who has the benefit of age.

When Beatrice meets Benedick for the first time after his change of heart she does not understand what is going on and cannot assess it. This once again can be seen by her choice of words in the mirror of dietetics "[...] you have no stomach, signor, fare you well" (II, iii, 207). The expression "no stomach" could mean that Benedick lost his appetite, which would be a sign that he suffers from melancholy. Love melancholy will indeed follow. It could also mean that he lost his courage to continue the verbal combat between them. In this sense Beatrice's statement is a challenge to continue this verbal combat. For the answer that Benedick previously gave her when she called him in for dinner was a complete deviation from the language he normally uses ("Fair Beatrice, I thank you for your pains" is an iambic pentameter, he never called her *fair* before and the sudden politeness is extraordinary). It is more a language of love than of combat. For the valiant trencherman Benedick to have lost his appetite would be an equally extraordinary thing and contrary to how Beatrice characterised Benedick previously. Beatrice realises Benedick's change of language as a hint of his change of passion and it is with the concepts of dietetics and metaphor that she tries to categorise this change and come to terms with what is going on. Dietetics here shows her complete confusion.

Next when Benedick declares his love to Beatrice and tries to make her confess her love for him, dietetics once again becomes a topic in the dialogue: as a device to try and find out the real disposition of the interlocutor.

Benedick:	By my sword, Beatrice, thou lovest me.
Beatrice:	Do not swear and eat it.
Benedick:	I will swear by it that you love me, and will make him eat it that says I love you not.
Beatrice:	Will you not eat your word?
Benedick:	With no sauce that can be devised to it: [...] (IV, i, 265–70)

To eat your word is an idiomatic expression which actually means to regret what you say. In this context Beatrice's request "Do not swear and eat it" and her following question "Will you not eat your word?" also mean something else, namely the request that Benedick should not become the one she thought he was previously: someone who eats everything and follows his basic instincts and desires and one who is choleric. When Benedick answers "With no sauce that can be devised to it [...]", this utterance carries the same double meaning. He won't regret his declaration of love and he won't change back into who he was before he fell in love with her now. From that moment the whole complex of using words and concepts relating to dietetics is dropped in the relationship between Beatrice and Benedick. It is no longer

[49]Ibid., 36.

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necessary as the relationship is now re-established, they do not need to allude to feelings under the cloak of dietetics but can openly declare them.

There is only one other incident in which dietetics is used by Beatrice to show her feelings not towards Benedick but towards Claudio. Claudio who believed that his future wife, Beatrice's cousin Hero, was unfaithful to him slandered her in front of the whole wedding congregation and destroyed her honour (IV, i). Beatrice wants to see Claudio dead for what he did but there is no one in her family who can take vengeance and duel with him as there are no young men in her family. The moment Benedick binds himself to her she asks him to take revenge on Claudio and as he refuses at first she breaks out within this harmonious declaration-of-love scene with: ''Oh God that I were a man! I would eat his heart in the market place'' (IV, i, 295). Now she is the one who would eat everything and would even become a cannibal to satisfy her feelings of bitter resentment. *She* is the one who would ignore all rules of dietetics and become what she accused Benedick of being. This retreat into a dangerous attitude towards what you can possibly eat demonstrates Beatrice's anger and helplessness and how she becomes a victim of her own choler. Now it is Benedick who cools her choleric temper. From this moment the vocabulary of eating and being eaten is finally and completely discarded. For the couple Hero and Claudio language and concepts of dietetics do not play a role. For Beatrice and Benedick they do until the declaration of love. The semantic field *food* is an important part of the verbal combat with which an evaluation of the character of the interlocutor is presented in detail.

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4.3 As You like It

The way to a man's heart is through his stomach. In a peculiar way, the clown Touchstone in AYL seems to be a perfect example of this. He is constantly referring to food and his ideal of love is the mere sensual love that is seen as being on the same level as the basic desire to eat and drink. In AYL concepts and terms of dietetics are mainly used to legitimate sexual desire and not to describe feelings. Look at the following passage:

> Touchstone: I remember the wooing of a peascod instead of her, from whom I took two cods, and giving her them again, said with weeping tears, ''Wear these for my sake.'' [...] (II, iv, 47–50)

Touchstone talks about young peas and Bartholomaeus would have a lot to say on the digestion of young peas,[50] but here it is not the rules of dietetics that are crucial but the sexual allusion behind this term *peascod*. If you swap the two syllables you get *codpiece*. The whole passage from which this sentence stems is full of sexual allusions, of bawdy language. The dietetic implications are of no concern to the sensual lover

[50]Bartholomaeus, 301r, 302.

who is not interested in the psychology of true love and how to balance the bodily humours to be able to experience this passion.

In Touchstone's utterance "[...] to cast away honesty upon a foul slut were to put good meat into an unclean dish" (III, iii, 31f), *dish* can mean a bowl or a meal, *unclean* has the double meaning of being indecent or unhealthy if referring to a meal. According to dietetic regulations it is never advisable to mix food, especially gross food and fine food, for each dominant humour needs different nutrition and it is difficult for the stomach to digest gross and fine food at the same time.[51] For every mixture of humour you need appropriate nutrition and for every disposition the appropriate conduct. "One man's meat is another man's poison" is a proverb that apparently came into existence in 1576.[52] On the other hand a bad disposition like indecency must be eradicated while a good disposition like honesty must be supported. The dominant humour that causes a bad disposition can be balanced by supporting the other humours, for instance by eating the food that nourishes those humours.[53] In this respect fine food has to be added to gross food. Touchstone, it becomes obvious, recalls the principles of dietetics, but only as long as they fit his personal inclinations. By relating honour to food Touchstone also refers to the desires residing in the vegetative soul: it is mere sexual desire he has in mind. This can also be seen in the following passage: "[...] honesty coupled to beauty is to have honey a sauce to sugar" (III, ii, 26f). According to Elyot honey supports choler. It digests superfluous phlegm, cleans, changes, nourishes and preserves those parts of the organism that have not been corrupted yet.[54] That of course is a quality that Touchstone does not like. Furthermore sugar and honey are quite similar in quality. Sugar combined with honey would reinforce the honesty of the beautiful woman, which Touchstone does not want. *The School of Salernum* also emphasises that a sauce should be added to any dish and that a salty sauce is recommendable.[55] One could argue, therefore, that a salty sauce to a sweet dish would ensure that an excess of sweetness will be avoided. On the other hand Touchstone's statement runs counter to the Platonic principle of the *kalokagathia*, which is the idea that the beauty of the body is a manifestation of inner beauty, the beauty of the soul. This idea that a beautiful person should be a good and an honest person as well was widely used in the Elizabethan period.[56] Honesty and beauty have to appear together in a human being. Touchstone however turns this principle upside down for his bawdy.[57] He would prefer beauty in combination with sexual desire and indecency in a woman. For him honesty would be out of place no matter whether the woman was ugly or beautiful. He only wants to have his sexual desires satisfied. The dietetic terminology,

[51]Elyot, 42, 42r.
[52]Mieder, ed., 82.
[53]Hoeniger, 107.
[54]Elyot, 35.
[55]*The School of Salernum*, 49.
[56]Also cf. Charron, 17f.
[57]*Bawdy language* is a kind of slang that was used in Shakespeare's lifetime not exclusively but frequently to make a sexual allusion (Scheler, 108ff).

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whether used metaphorically or with its actual meaning, refers to the basic sexual desires of the sensual lover, once again recalling that the sexual appetite and the desire to eat both reside in the vegetative soul.

For the other lovers in AYL another connection of love and food is important, namely the notion that a lover's passion nourishes your own. "The sight of lovers feedeth those in love" (III, iv, 53), says Rosalind when Corin promises her the spectacle of a love-sick shepherd wooing a scornful shepherdess and she follows him to watch them, in order to feed her own feelings for Orlando. And love nourishes both the passions of joy and pain as it contains both. So does Oliver describe Orlando's feelings for Rosalind: he was "[...] chewing the food of sweet and bitter fancy, [...]" (IV, iii, 102). To talk about the beloved also feeds the longing of the lover as Celia refers to when she wants to tell Rosalind about her meeting Orlando in the forest: "[...] take a taste of my finding him, and relish it with good observance [...]" (III, ii, 225f). And finally when Jaques predicts for Touchstone at the end of the play, "[...] thy loving voyage / Is but for two months victualled [...]" (V, iv, 187), he alludes to both ideas that combine love and food in AYL, the sexual desires and the nourishment of love and passion.

Once again the concepts of dietetics help to understand the choice of words and the depiction of character. The sensual lover is characterised as arguing in terms of dietetics only as long as it serves his purposes and using the vocabulary of food to allude to the other basic desire residing in the vegetative soul, sexual desire. Also the language becomes more and more metaphorical and an interesting mixture of a metaphorical as well as semantic use of the semantic field *food* emerges.

5. Conclusion

When Shakespeare refers to habits of drinking and eating in his romantic comedies these are not banal statements which simply add to a more true-to-life portrayal of the characters, who, as in real life, simply need to eat and drink. Everything is said for a purpose, and many layers of meaning are found behind the choice of words. It is only with the knowledge of the concept of dietetics in Shakespeare's lifetime that language and character can be fully understood. This is in contrast to his early comedies, such as *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, in which references to dietetics are very limited, leaving much more room for mere metaphorical and religious allusions.[58]

In the romantic comedies a differentiation of the varying ideals of love via dietetic vocabulary is possible. If they become rational lovers like Beatrice and Benedick the dietetic vocabulary ceases the moment this transformation is accomplished. There is the idealised lover who does not entirely follow the dietetic regulations and puts them in context with complex and exaggerated images. There is the clown as a representative of mere sensual love who alludes to sexual desire with dietetic vocabulary demonstrating his knowledge of dietetics; but he too only argues

[58]Biewer, *Die Sprache der Liebe in Shakespeares Komödien*, 308–10.

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accordingly as long as it serves his own purpose. There is the tendency to see food in context with basic desires and alluding to dietetic vocabulary to show someone is not in love.

As for language, it is interesting to see how the semantic field *food*, the moment the dietetic regulations referred to become clear to the reader, enriches the presentation of a character. It also shows an interesting mixture of a semantic description of and a metaphoric allusion to eating. If characters talk about pepper and vinegar this is a reference to their disposition and therefore helps the audience judge their actions. But if love is "as hungry as the sea" and a lover "feedeth on those that love" the metaphoric usage is obvious. These two usages blend into each other, particularly for the idealised lover who is fond of his own imaginary style and for the merely sensual lover who leaves the doctrine of dietetics behind the moment it speaks against his desires.

Moreover, the regulations of dietetics show quite clearly which character is supposed to be judged favourably and which unfavourably, simply by hearing about their drinking and eating habits. Suddenly, we gain a deeper insight into characters by looking at the way and what they eat and drink or claim to know about other people's drinking and eating behaviour, which tells us about their relationships with the person described. The language is a very rich indicator of how Shakespeare wants us to read his characters. Whether for the food of love or the love of food: the rich vocabulary of the late comedies, combined with ideological concepts of the time, shows once again the true mastery of the author.

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